ABSTRACT

A process is described for the stereospecific preparation of an ester of formula (I): wherein * signifies the (R) stereoisomer; R^1 is selected from C_{1-6} alkyl, preferably ethyl; and R_2 is hydrogen, a protecting group or a leaving group which process comprises reaction of a nitrile of formula (II): wherein * signifies the (R) stereoisonomer; and Ph is the phenyl group $C_6 H_5$ with a solution of an inorganic acid in an alcohol and optional conversion of the compound of formula (I) wherein R^2 is H so prepared to any other desired compound of formula (I) by standard methods in the art. The compounds of formula (I) are chiral esters, useful as intermediates in the synthesis of the family of acetylcholine esterase (ACE) inhibitors known as "prils", such as lisinopril, cilazapril, enalapril, benazepril, ramipril, delapril, enalaprilat, imidapril, spirapril, trandolapril and others.

$$Ph - CH_2 - CH_2 - CH^{*}(OR^2) - COOR^1 \qquad (I)$$

$$Ph - CH_2 - CH_2 - CH^{*}(OH) - CN \qquad (II)$$